

# Juvenile Domestic Violence Offenders and the Proposed Alternatives

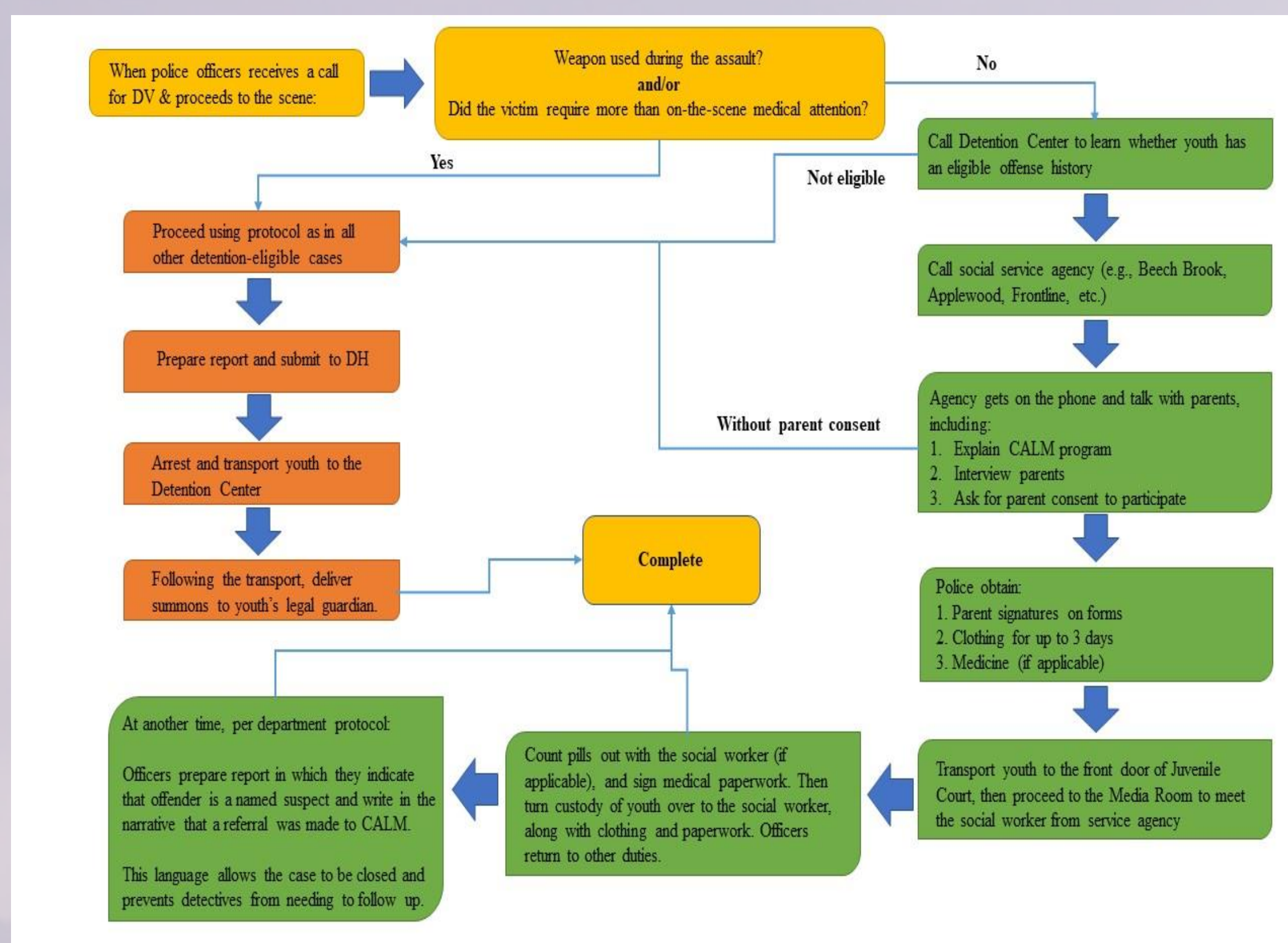
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## Statement of Problem

Historically, people viewed domestic violence as a private problem (Worden & Carlson, 2005), and it has long been synonymous with intimate partner violence (IPV) or child abuse, rarely focusing on other intrafamilial victim-offender relationships, especially when children play the role of offenders (Walsh & Krienert, 2007). However, about 22% of sex and assault offenses reported to law enforcement during 2016 were committed by offenders who had a family relationship with the victims, and approximately 12% of total offenders were juveniles (under the age of 18) (Federal Bureau of Intelligence, 2016). Considering the fact that many incidents of violence are not reported to law enforcement, it is not surprising that the actual number is probably considerably higher.

## Objectives of Program

The Coordinated Approach to Low-risk Misdemeanors (CALM) is a service offered through Cuyahoga County Juvenile Court in partnership with several local child-serving agencies to provide detention alternatives for youth arrested for low-level domestic violence offenses. CALM consists of three components, including assessment/screening, respite services, and brief case management to link the families with ongoing community-based services. Because CALM operates as a diversion program, a parent/guardian must give consent for their child to participate in the service.

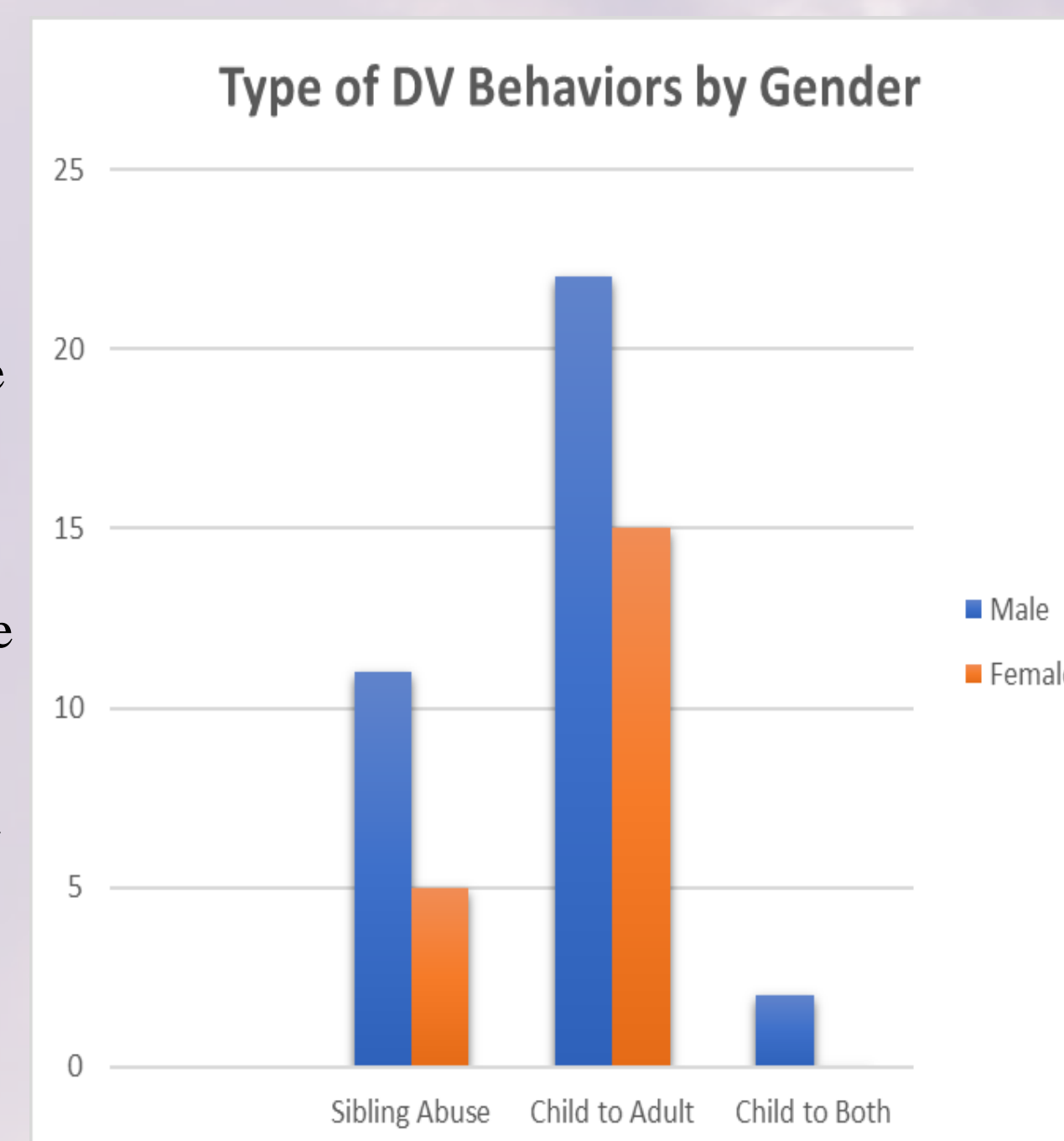


## Description of Program

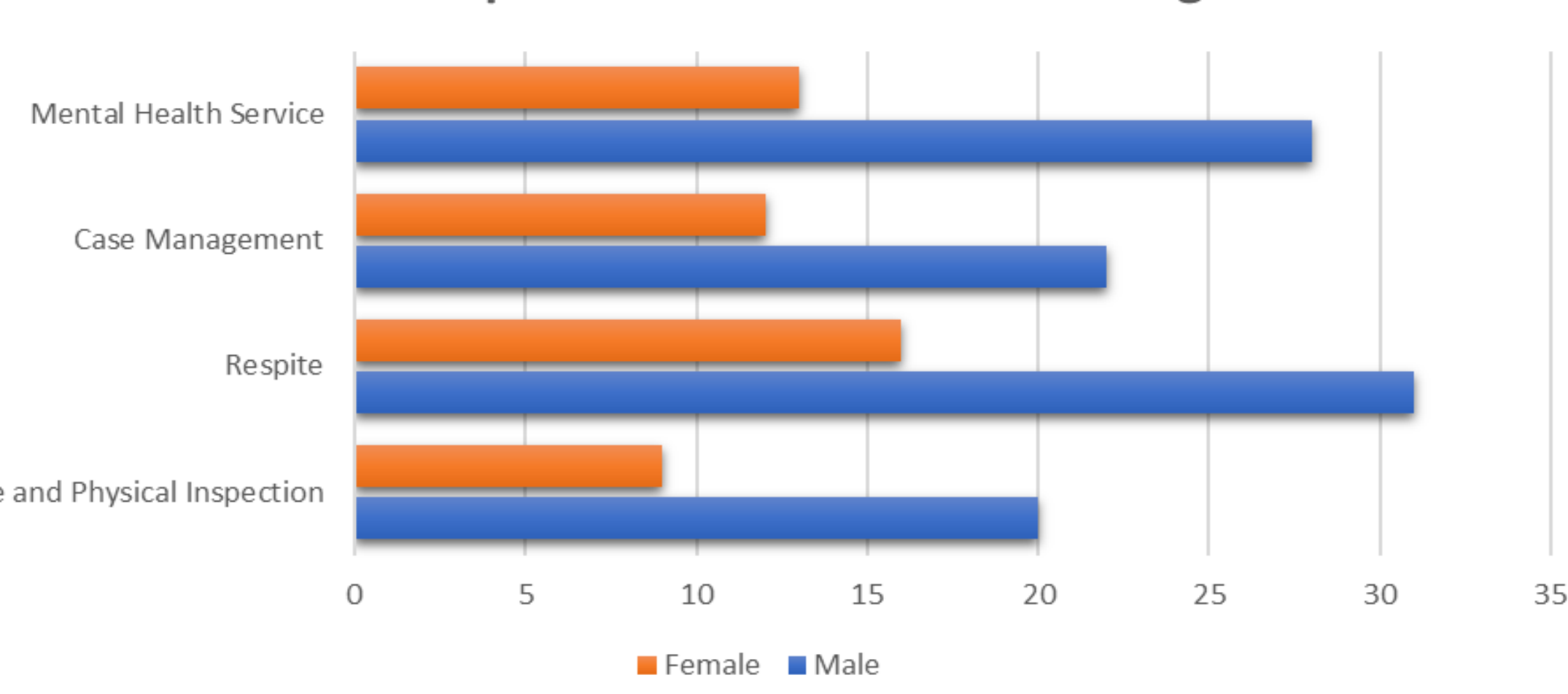
CALM program mainly offers respite care for young people involved in low-level domestic violence offenses and also connects families to services, when needed. While the children are placed in respite care, their families have the opportunity to cool down from the conflict and engage in service planning with the CALM case manager. Services include but are not limited to: crisis intervention counseling, family counseling, mentoring, safety planning, linkage to open community-based services, such as Alcoholics Anonymous and a plan for either reunification of the youth with the family or other relatives, or an alternative living arrangement for the youth. The CALM case manager then closes the case, only re-engaging with the family to ascertain the success of the intervention 30 days later. The short-term nature of the intervention is designed to encourage self-sufficiency of the families, rather than have them rely upon the Court for services.

## Findings to Date

Outcomes were assessed for consecutive youths enrolled in CALM since its inception date of October 15, 2014, to January 16, 2017 (N=55). The average age was 14.9 years old (range: 10.5-17.5 years). Thirty-five were male (63.6%); the sample was overwhelmingly African American (98.2%), with one participant being Latino or Hispanic. Table 1 displays the types of domestic violence that occurred, with approximately 2 of 3 incidences being the child to adult. The overwhelming majority of parents/guardians who had children/adolescents that were eligible for the program signed the consent form (91%).

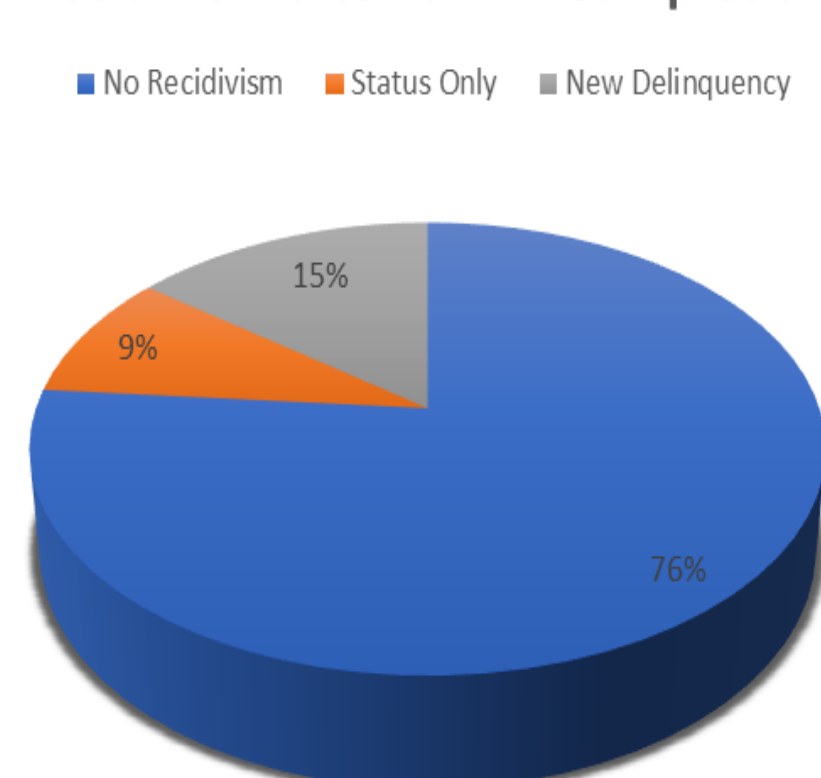


## The Most Frequent Service Received During CALM



Youths spent an average of approximately 5.0 days being served by the CALM program, with a range from 1 to 20 days ( $SD=3.921$ ). Individuals were tracked through examining juvenile court records after their discharge from CALM to determine whether or not they were charged with a juvenile offense. The follow-up period from program inception was 812 days for the first CALM client and 142 days for the 55th client (mean follow-up days=464).

## Recidivism after CALM Completion



Of the 55 participants, eight (14.5%) were charged with a new delinquency during the follow-up period. The average age of youths (at program entry) charged with new offenses was 14.6 years, which is similar to the average age of all program participants, 14.9 years. The average time of post-discharge that youth committed a new offense was 265.6 days.

Two youths committed a violent offense, one of which was a serious act of domestic violence resulting in the one victim being hospitalized, and the other an after-school fight resulting in no reportable injuries.

## Interpretations of Findings

Based on the fact that 47 of the cases did not further offend, and the documentation of only one primary violent offense, it is concluded that the diversion of this population of juvenile domestic violence offenders was warranted and beneficial because it kept youth away from the dangers of being confined to the detention center. Compared to the CALM program, juvenile detention for low-risk, low-level offenders is not an appropriate intervention, as it increases the likelihood of the juvenile moving deeper into the juvenile justice system (Araji, 2012). Additionally, these juveniles tend to get bullied and/or cajoled into committing negative behaviors by high-risk, high-level offenders who have implications for their future development and well-being (Forman, 2010; Holman & Ziedenberg, 2006).

Another benefit of this program was that our sample was almost entirely African American thereby allowing the diversion of these minorities from the juvenile justice system. The importance of this benefit cannot be overstated because of a great deal of national attention being given to the disproportionate detention of minority youth and ways in which this can be prevented. This program provides a means to prevent such detention.

In addition, the average cost of service provided to the CALM participants was \$1,000, while the average cost of incarcerating a juvenile domestic violence perpetrator in the Cuyahoga County Juvenile Detention Facility is approximately \$5,000, exclusive of auxiliary services.

## Implications

The CALM program was successful in diverting youth from juvenile detention with the commitment of minimal violent crime by diverted youth. The program can provide a model for communities interested in juvenile domestic violence diversion, particularly in African American populations. Given the high monetary expense of juvenile detention and its synergistic adverse effects on low-risk, low-level offenders, this and similar programs should be a top priority consideration for communities interested in alternative ways of treating juvenile domestic violence offenders.

## References

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